



## REPORT OF FACT FINDING REVIEW Massachusetts Department of Education

### Michael J. Perkins Elementary School Boston Public Schools

#### Executive Summary

From March 28 through April 2, 2004, a Fact Finding Team convened by the Department of Education visited Perkins Elementary School to investigate the reasons for low levels of student performance in ELA and math and to examine prospects for improving student performance. The five member team conducted 21 lesson observations and interviewed teachers, the acting principal, the math and ELA instructional coaches, as well as the deputy superintendent, change coach and school support specialist. Members of the team examined school planning documents, data analysis summaries, assessments of the school's WSIP, recent updates to the improvement plan, along with curriculum documents, reports from 'walk throughs' conducted by the ILT. From this broad source of information, the Fact-Finding Team concluded the primary reason for poor student performance is the quality of classroom instruction and inadequate systems to provide consistent monitoring and support for the improvement of teaching practices. Within the four domains that serve as the outline of the Fact-Finding review, the key elements of the team's findings are summarized below.

#### I Curriculum and Instruction

While there are pockets of instructional excellence present at the Perkins Elementary School, the overall quality of classroom practice is inadequate to serve the extensive needs of the Perkins student population. Teachers have not been held accountable for meeting explicit instructional expectations and insufficient resources (time and personnel) are available for consistent monitoring of instruction and curriculum implementation. In addition to instructional weaknesses, support services are insufficient for the large number of students struggling with math and ELA concepts.

- Inconsistent implementation of the English language arts curriculum and lack of proficiency in delivering the mathematics curriculum are common in many classrooms at the Perkins school.
- The recent retirement of the long-serving principal leaves an interim in place with numerous challenges to attend to. A part-time (twice per month) mathematics coach is unable to offer support of sufficient depth and breadth to develop teachers' competence in the TERC *Investigations* program.
- The Fall 2003 *Addendum* to the Perkins *Whole School Improvement Plan* (WSIP) remedies some of the deficiencies in the original draft of the plan by specifying clearer instructional expectations. District tools offer explicit guidance on instructional "best practices."
- A before school program provides assistance to a small segment of the Perkins population, but additional services during the school day are limited to only those students with identified special needs.

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- District programs to improve teaching skills are in place, but their effectiveness is not closely monitored to assure teachers develop confidence and competence in the instructional skills they learn. Mandated district curricula have changed periodically, leading to skeptical embrace of the newest program and limiting the pace at which teachers develop skill in the new instructional designs.
- Community partnerships have been underutilized to bring resources (volunteer tutors, library materials, etc) to serve as additional tools for student remediation.

## **II School Climate**

Among the staff at the Perkins School, there is a lack of common understanding of the current status of student achievement, the desired targets for student performance, and of the critical steps needed to move students toward the target. A few teacher leaders along with the Literacy Coach have been involved in data analyses for improvement planning, but most of the faculty has limited awareness and understanding of the proficiency standards for their grade level.

- In recent years, whole school meetings have been eliminated as a regular weekly event, limiting the time available for whole-school sharing and conversation.
- Common planning time available to teachers has not been structured to require focused attention to instructional practices.
- Across the school, staff members are found to be caring and motivated to do what is best for their students. Clear direction and structured collaboration will enhance the impact of their individual efforts.

## **III. Organizational Structures and Management**

A key factor in the poor performance of Perkins Elementary School students is the inefficient and ineffective system for monitoring the quality of teaching and for providing sustained support to improve instruction.

- Only one individual in the building is charged with evaluating all teachers, and recent feedback to teachers has not been helpful in promoting change in practices. Most Perkins teachers receive formal evaluations every other year.
- Professional development provided by the district and the district appointed coaches, while plentiful and targeted to student needs, is less than fully effective because of the limited presence of coaches in the school to monitor implementation of preferred instructional practices.
- The latest instructional 'walk-throughs' by the Perkins Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) provided more specific and detailed feedback to teachers than the early efforts to self-monitor through this process. Recent contract settlements will allow the ILT to resume its work for the balance of the year.
- The veteran staff possesses a broad range of expertise across all core academic areas. Tapping into the practical wisdom of the staff and the motivation of the school's professionals to improve through collaborative sharing teams or similar structures would enhance each teacher's repertoire to better serve student needs.



#### IV. Leadership and Planning

Absence of a consistent, strong instructional leader at Perkins has contributed to the poor student performance at the school.

- Neither the recently retired long-term principal nor the staff at Perkins was held to strict expectations for performance and accountability according to extensive interviews during the Fact-Finding visit.
- The district will need to address the need for a strong instructional leader for the veteran staff at Perkins in its recruitment and hiring process. The new leader's skills should match the needs of the staff and students at Perkins to assure realistic progress.
- The Fall 2003 *Addendum* to the Perkins WSIP begins to define the specific needs of Perkins staff and students but more comprehensive engagement of all faculty will expand the impact of the planning process.



At present, a number of leading universities in the United States are concerned to the point of despair with the situation.

Further, the situation is being worsened by the fact that in some cases the government is not only not providing the necessary funds but is also interfering with the work of the universities.

The present situation is a serious one for a number of reasons. First, the government is not only not providing the necessary funds but is also interfering with the work of the universities. This is a serious situation for the future of the country. The government must take steps to improve the situation and to provide the necessary funds for the universities. The universities must also take steps to improve their work and to provide the necessary training for the future of the country.

## Fact-Finding Review Process

The Fact-Finding Review is the third stage in the process used to assess school performance under the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System. At the first stage of the process, a school's performance and improvement on state MCAS tests is rated. Schools that perform in the lowest School Performance Rating categories (very high percentage of students with failing MCAS performance; low percentage proficient and advanced) may be referred for a Panel Review.

The Panel Review process constitutes the second stage of the School and District Accountability System. Panel Reviews are conducted to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether state intervention is needed to guide improvement efforts in schools where student's MCAS performance is critically low and no trend toward improved student performance is evident from MCAS data. Panels, consisting of 3-5 members, review data and written information on the school's performance and improvement efforts and spend two days visiting the school and meeting with school and district leaders.

The Review Panel's charge is to advise the Commissioner of Education, at the conclusion of the review process, of its judgment on two questions:

- Does the school under review have a sound plan for improving student performance?
- Are the conditions in place for the successful implementation of the school's improvement plan?

If the answer to either or both of these questions is no, the Commissioner may declare the school to be under-performing.

Schools that are declared to be under-performing enter the third stage in the School and District Accountability System and undergo an in-depth diagnostic Fact-Finding Review.

The purposes of the Fact-Finding Review are to:

- Provide an in-depth diagnosis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, including specific causal analysis.
- Use extensive observation (school and classroom) to build a knowledge base for the school's planning work.
- Make specific recommendations for the development of the school's improvement plan

The Fact-Finding Team's charge is to advise the Commissioner and Board of Education, at the conclusion of the review process, of its judgment on two key questions:

1. What are the reasons for the low levels of student performance in ELA and mathematics at this school?
2. What are the prospects for improved student performance at this school?





The Fact-Finding Team answers the key questions based on evidence collected through observations of teaching and learning, interviews of faculty, students, administrators, district personnel and other school stakeholders and through the review of documents, including the school improvement plan, student assessment information, curriculum documents, and student work. The team's judgments must be robust and fully supported by evidence.

The Fact-Finding Team's judgments are guided by a protocol which requires the team to respond to the key questions in each of the following domains: curriculum and instruction; school climate; organizational structures and management; leadership and planning. The Fact-Finding Team uses its professional judgment to focus on domains that reveal key strengths and areas for improvement in the school.

## **Michael Perkins Elementary School**

### **Enrollment**

The Michael Perkins School is one of 83 elementary schools in Boston. This school serves students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Preliminary tabulations based on the October 1, 2003 data collection show that 203 students are enrolled in the school this academic year. Enrollment trends for the period 2001-2004 at the Perkins Schools show a steady decline from 250 in 2001 to 203 this year. During this period slightly above 10 percent of the school's total population has been Asian. Black students have comprised nearly 45 percent; Hispanics, 15 percent, and whites almost 30 percent. Over 90 percent of students at the Perkins School qualify as low-income.

The proportion of students for whom English is not the first language has fluctuated between 17 and 26 percent over the 2001-2004 period. The percentage of Limited English Proficient students at the Perkins School increased considerably over the same period, from one percent to 13 percent. Special education enrollment in 2003 and 2004 were 16 and 13 percent respectively.

Between 2000 and 2003, attendance at the Perkins Elementary School steadily declined from 93.7 to 82.8 percent. The number of days students were absent, however, fell by almost 50 percent from 11.3 to 6.3 percent. Out-of-school suspensions during this period were between zero and one percent. No in-school suspensions or exclusions were reported during that period.

### **Staffing**

The 2003-2004 Perkins School's staffing report indicates that the school is composed of 19 administrators, teachers, and guidance personnel. Fifteen percent of educators at this school have taught there for fewer than five years. All but three staff members are certified in the subject that they teach.



## MCAS Overview

Students at the Perkins Elementary School are assessed in grades 3 and 4 in English language arts (ELA) and in grade 4 in mathematics. Since 1999, the school has never been found to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In the mid-cycle III (2003-2004) report, the school failed to make AYP in ELA and for its Free/Reduced lunch subgroup.<sup>1</sup> The school only made AYP for its African-American subgroup. In mathematics, the school has not made AYP since 1999. In addition, in mid-Cycle III it was found to not have made AYP in the aggregate and for all qualifying subgroups.

## Student Performance in English Language Arts

### Regular Education

At the grade 3 level in Reading, the performance of regular education students has worsened since the test was first introduced in 2001. In 2001, 48 percent of students were found proficient, 45 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level and six percent at Warning. In 2002, the percentage of proficient students fell to 45 percent while Needs Improvement increased to 55 percent. In the most recent administration of the MCAS test, the percentage of students who scored at the Warning level was further reduced to 38 percent, and the proportion at Needs Improvement increased to 67 percent.

At the grade 4 level in ELA, the performance of regular education students has fluctuated widely over the last four years. In 2000, 10 percent of students were found proficient; 83 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level, and seven percent at Warning. In 2001, the proportion of students who scored at the Proficient and Advanced levels increased to 48 percent of students, while 41 percent were at Needs Improvement, and 11 percent at Warning. In 2002, the percentage of proficient students fell to 24 percent. The percentage of students in need of improvement increased to 57 percent and those at Warning also increased to 19 percent. In 2003, the percentage of proficient students further decreased to 17 percent; 67 percent of scores were found at the Needs Improvement level and the remaining 17 percent in Warning.

### Special Education

Fewer than 10 special education students were assessed in 2001 through 2003.

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001, student performance is disaggregated by the following subgroups: Limited English Proficient, Special Education, Free/Reduced Lunch, African-American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and White. A minimum of 20 students per subgroup is required to issue a statistically sound rating or determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at the Perkins School in 2003 were African-American/Black and Free/Reduced lunch in ELA and Free/Reduced Lunch in mathematics.





## **Limited English Proficient**

Fewer than 10 limited English proficient students were assessed in 2000 through 2003.

## **Student Performance in Mathematics**

### **Regular Education**

The performance of regular education students at this school steadily worsened between 2000 and 2003. In 2000, 28 percent of regular education students were proficient; 55 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level, and 17 percent at Warning. In 2001, the proportion of proficient and advanced students fell to 15 percent, while those in need of improvement increased to 48 percent and those at the Warning level also increased to 37 percent. Results from the 2002 math assessment show 10 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders proficient. Forty-eight percent scored at the Needs Improvement level and the remaining 43 percent at Warning. In 2003, no students were proficient. Student performance was divided between the Needs Improvement level, where 56 percent of students performed and Warning where 44 percent of scores were found.

### **Special Education**

Fewer than 10 special education students were assessed in 2001 through 2003.

### **Limited English Proficient**

Fewer than 10 limited English proficient students were assessed in 2000 through 2003.

## **Key Domains of Inquiry**

### **I: Curriculum and Instruction**

Within the domain of Curriculum and Instruction, the Fact-Finding Team concluded that two conditions have a major impact on student performance: (1) the quality of instructional methods and practices, and (2) insufficient programs and services for students struggling to acquire essential concepts and skills in reading and mathematics.

In the process of identifying key factors in the area of curriculum and instruction influencing poor student performance, the Fact Finding Team observed 10 English language arts lessons (reading/ writing), 7 math lessons, and 4 lessons in other classes (art, computer). Team members rated the lessons on a variety of instructional features, including the quality of instructional method, using a scale of 1 (low; does not meet acceptable standard) to 3 (exemplifies good practice). In English language arts classes, four lessons were rated 3, four were rated 1, and two were scored 2 (or average) by the observers. Common features of classes rated highly included teachers varying lesson activity and maintaining a productive pace throughout the lesson.





Teachers stated objectives clearly to students and affirmed student understanding regularly throughout the lesson.

In the classes rated below acceptable standards, the purpose of the lesson was poorly defined and students received little feedback and were not told what the quality of acceptable work would be. Pacing of the weak lessons did not accommodate either able or struggling students, and the students were unchallenged by the rote responses required by the teacher. The instructional pattern intended to be part of the Reader's and Writer's Workshop process, including mini-lesson and independent practice, was not apparent in the majority of ELA classes observed.

Math lessons were rated lower than the ELA classes by the Fact-Finding Team. One of the seven lessons rated a 3 for effective methodology, one was rated 2 (acceptable), and five were considered below acceptable standards by the observers. In all math classes, whole class instruction was used to present a concept or skill to all students at the same pace and pattern. Students were to complete worksheets after the teacher completed a sample problem on the board. It was infrequent for observers to notice students receiving feedback on their work except for those selected to present their solutions on the board. Several instances of incorrect information or conflicting information were presented by teachers. Many teachers held the TERC manual during the lesson and referred to it frequently to read from the instructions they were to follow.

A key factor having an impact on the quality of instruction is the lack of consistency in the delivery of the English Language Arts curriculum. The major literacy strategy, Reader's and Writer's Workshop, has provided teachers with the freedom and the challenge of implementing the content and defining a sequence of instruction according to individual decision-making within the broad guidelines of the district scope and sequence. Flexibility of implementation is evident not only across grade levels, but within grade levels as well. Only one teacher grade level group reported regularly meeting to coordinate instruction between the two classroom teachers. The addition of word study strategies to the school's WSIP and the Making Meaning program for grades 1-5 adds another layer to the academic program that requires coordination and collaboration. While common meeting time is available for grade level teachers to meet, there is no required structure for the meeting time nor is there an expectation that teachers will use the time to address instructional issues.

Contributing to the inconsistency in the design of the ELA curriculum and weak instructional proficiency in mathematics is the limited availability of instructional support staff. A single interim principal has recently taken over for the retired long serving administrator, and is managing all the operations, facilities and academic oversight duties at the school. A district provided math coach is on site two days per month, insufficient to provide sustained attention to the extensive needs of teachers who are just beginning their use of TERC *Investigations*. The literacy coach has more time on site, but circulates among grade level teams in six week cycles for the Collaborative Coaching and Learning process (CCL), available for limited support for other teachers during their 'off' cycle weeks. Teachers commented on the positive impact CCL and the math coaches have on their work, but were dismayed at the limited access to these valuable support personnel. According to the coaches, they have no responsibility for evaluating teacher skill at implementing the curriculum, they provide formative assistance one on one.



Without the help of other instructional monitoring processes, the school has insufficient data about current practices and the areas of strength and deficiency.

As part of the WSIP design, the school designated the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to conduct instructional monitoring visits known as "walk throughs" to assess the degree of implementation of the school's improvement strategies. Early in the school year, the walk through feedback had little impact on classroom change, but sample reports from weekly walk throughs occurring in November and December show more extensive, specific recommendations for teachers. The improved quality of the ILT walk through feedback is a positive change the school can build on to provide focused, directed feedback to teachers to facilitate adoption of 'best practices.' Recent problems in teachers' contracted negotiations cancelled a number of planned walk-throughs, but members of the Perkins ILT expressed genuine interest in resuming the walk-throughs now that settlement has been reached. This desire and motivation to participate in the improvement of Perkins is an additional strength the school can build on to reach its improvement targets.

The district can complement the school's efforts to improve its instructional practices by assuring that mandated academic programs remain in place for sufficient time to allow teachers to develop the proficiency necessary to provide the high quality teaching students at Perkins need. Veteran teachers explained that curricula have changed an average of every five years, and complained that they rarely had the chance to feel fully confident in their skills before being required to adopt new programs in the core academic areas.

The second key factor influencing the poor student performance at Perkins is the lack of sufficient student intervention and remediation services. Currently, the school has a before-school program that provides support in math and ELA to approximately 30 students, staffed by Perkins teachers. As a late-starting school, Perkins has the time to offer more extensive support services between 7:30 and 9:15 a.m. but insufficient resources to staff the service. Given that *none* of Perkins fourth graders reached proficiency on the 2003 MCAS mathematics assessment, the Fact-Finding Team believes there are more than 30 students in need of extensive intervention and remediation support. In ELA, 89 percent of the school's students scored in the 'warning' and 'needs improvement' categories, below the level of proficiency expected by the state standards. While mathematics performance is critically low, ELA achievement also requires attention both within the school day as well as beyond the little more than five hours (9:45 am to 3:05 pm) designated for this school as instructional time.

The school has a model for delivery of remedial services in its existing before school program that it can build on to develop a more extensive support program. The challenges presented by the expansion of this program include transportation of students needing services to the school at the earlier hour and staffing the remedial sessions with qualified personnel. The district can provide the resources needed to accomplish the intervention to address the serious needs of Perkins students. In addition, a partnership with Gillette was reported to have been in place at Perkins in prior years. District personnel can reinvigorate that partnership to bring volunteer tutors to Perkins during the school day or before or after school to provide additional adult assistance. Financial resources to enhance the school's library or its supply of remediation software for its computer lab would be a valuable bonus for the academic programs at Perkins.





The desire and motivation to improve exists at Perkins and would be mobilized to a productive end with modest additional resources.

## II: School Climate

The Fact-Finding Team discovered a wide range of familiarity among Perkins staff with the content and purposes of the school's plans for improvement. While faculty members were polite and respectful of one another, teachers were often unaware of each others' challenges and successes, spending most of their instructional time isolated in their classrooms. This has resulted in a lack of common understanding of the status of student achievement, the targets students must meet, and the plans for reaching those targets identified in the Perkins WSIP.

In interviews during the Fact-Finding visit, teachers -- particularly those in the primary grades -- sometimes expressed surprise at Perkins' designation as an underperforming school. Teachers in tested grades and in those grades adjacent to the tested grades demonstrated greater familiarity with the current performance levels of their students, but remained unconvinced that the school's WSIP strategies would lead to higher achievement. Members of the Perkins ILT, the former principal, and the Literacy Coach participated in the intensive data analysis leading to the selection of strategies in the WSIP and they were most articulate about the anticipated impact of the strategies selected for attention in the improvement plan. Without a common understanding of the learning gaps and commitment to the strategies to eliminate those gaps, it is unlikely that the efforts of Perkins teachers will lead to the dramatic changes essential to student improvement.

One recent event demonstrated to both staff and to the Fact-Finding Team the possibility for change at Perkins. The math coach presented to the faculty sample questions from the 2003 MCAS mathematics exam. She traced the concepts required to solve the open response problem from the earliest grade level units in TERC through each grade in succession to show the progressive and incremental development of learning expected of students as they approach the fourth grade. Teachers described to the Fact-Finding Team how striking it was for them to see the precise links between kindergarten and first graders sequencing numbers on a number line and fourth graders solving word problems asking for differences and comparisons. In addition to an enhanced understanding of the progression of math concepts, teachers reported the event raised their awareness of the interdependence of all teachers in the school. Primary teachers explained they began to recognize more concretely how their work makes a difference to the upper grades teachers.

To the benefit of Perkins staff, common planning time is already built into the schedule to allow teachers of the same grade to share practices and materials. At the present time, there are no requirements for teachers to make best use of that time, indicating a need for structure and expectations to accelerate the high level collaboration needed to promote the attainment of Perkins students. Within the district there are structured protocols available for "looking at student work" process which Perkins can access for its own use.





One challenge for Perkins will be to find a way to schedule common planning time for single teachers in grades 4 and 5, as well as to schedule time for meaningful collaboration among the whole staff. Previously, weekly faculty meetings held before school served an important goal of promoting social interaction among staff. Regular staff meetings have not been held for some time, but reinstituting them as a vehicle for collaborative problem solving, sharing of academic challenges and successes, as well as social interaction would be a benefit to the professional climate at the school. District support to develop creative solutions to scheduling challenges and to facilitate group problem solving activities is critical to the improvements at Perkins.

### **III: Organizational Structures and Management**

As a small school (200 students), Perkins Elementary School enjoys the benefit of a manageable student population but is challenged by the corresponding small number of staff to address multiple management and organizational chores. The Fact-Finding Team concluded that a key factor contributing to poor student performance at Perkins was the weak system for monitoring the quality of instruction. Only one administrator at the school is eligible to evaluate staff members, and according to the contract for professional status teachers in Boston, formal evaluations are conducted every other year. As a consequence, teacher evaluation is a poor tool for monitoring instruction on a frequent basis and for assuring that instructional changes are implemented effectively. District appointed literacy and math coaches are not charged with assessing teachers' instructional skill. The 'walk throughs' by the Perkins Instructional Leadership Team designed to monitor instructional practices across the building were suspended for several months during contract negotiations in the city. The Fact-Finding Team concluded that there are inadequate systems to assure that teachers make best use of the tools and methods included with the math and literacy programs.

Prospects for improving the quality of classroom instruction at Perkins are enhanced by the motivation among many staff members to do whatever they can to help students succeed. The greater specificity of the most recent ILT walk-through feedback suggests that this tool can be a helpful strategy for distributing responsibility for monitoring instruction more widely throughout the school. Recognizing the reality that there are likely to be few additional resources for additional administrative personnel at Perkins, the Fact-Finding Team concluded that the greatest impact on instructional improvement will be gained by delegating responsibility for defining particular instructional changes directly to each teacher, and holding each teacher accountable for providing evidence of their own change and the impact of their changed practices on student achievement. The collaborative problem solving process described in the narrative under Domain II: School Climate, can be a productive vehicle for teachers to examine their own practice within a small group of colleagues, to identify areas of need for support and guidance, and to share the results of their improvement efforts with their peers. The veteran staff at Perkins possesses a wealth of wisdom about instructional practices that can be tapped to address the needs of Perkins students. Individual teacher action plans can be regularly reviewed with administrators or coaches to assure school-wide coordination of change strategies.

To support the school's efforts to distribute responsibility and accountability for monitoring the quality of instruction among all faculty members as a step toward enhanced student achievement,



the district can provide expert consultants to assist in the development of a collaborative improvement culture. Meaningful and sustained follow-up of existing professional development activities by content experts will supplement the monitoring and support activities available from within the Perkins staff. This will require addressing the inadequate coaching time from literacy and math experts allocated to Perkins under the present configuration. A thorough and objective evaluation of the quality of the district's professional development offerings will provide rich information about the impact on student achievement of district efforts to improve teacher skill and knowledge in core academic areas. As partners in the improvement of Perkins student performance, the commitment and resources of both the district and school personnel will be essential.

#### **IV: Leadership and Planning**

Consistent with the findings presented in the preceding three domains, the Fact-Finding Team concluded that a key factor in the area of leadership and planning influencing student achievement at Perkins has been inadequate leadership guiding the staff toward data based decision making and problem solving to address the performance gaps among Perkins students. Historically, school leaders and staff members dutifully adopted the district-mandated curricula but did not examine in depth the specific knowledge and skills lacking among Perkins students. The long-serving principal who recently retired was credited by teachers with managing and maintaining an orderly school environment, but consistently faced barriers to improvement, many of which were attributed in teacher interviews to external factors (transportation limitations, placement rules, and family poverty). Until the 2002-2003 year, there were no concrete expectations that schools would use data to identify the specific learning gaps among the students and develop plans to address those gaps. Until recently, neither teachers nor administrators were held responsible for attaining specific achievement goals.

Prospects for reducing the impact of weak instructional leadership are positive if the district and school staff work together to hire an experienced leader to guide the school to address the particular needs of both teachers and students at Perkins. The Fall 2003 *Addendum* to the WSIP begins to define clear actions and tasks critical to school improvement. The new principal at Perkins must be skilled at leading an experienced, veteran staff to identify, adopt, and evaluate the effectiveness of those strategies. The January 2004 *Midyear Checkpoint Review* completed by the interim principal identifies specific learning standards and student skill deficits teachers must address. The new Perkins principal will best serve the school if he/ she has the content expertise or access to the content experts to help teachers work to help students eliminate those deficits. If the revised Perkins plan for improvement is built on a collaborative problem-solving culture, the new leader should have the commitment to make that culture function effectively.

To support the school, the district's obligation is to engage in a recruiting process that will bring to Perkins the skilled leader suited to the school's needs. The Fact-Finding Team recommends that the district complete the selection process in time for the new leader to join the staff as it moves through the PIM process this summer. A critical support from the district for the Perkins school leader and to other principals of small schools is guidance in supervising the multiple roles of facilities director, transportation manager, personnel executive, as well as instructional





leader. Skills in distributing leadership responsibilities across the staff can be promoted by experts provided by the district.

## Conclusion

At Perkins Elementary School, the Fact-Finding Team found that the primary factor leading to poor student achievement is the quality of instruction, with contributing factors including the absence of strong instructional leadership, inadequate interventions for struggling students, and irregular and unsystematic monitoring of instruction. Teachers at Perkins recognize the large number of limitations students bring with them to the school, and have not yet come to understand how instruction can overcome these barriers to success. In the current organizational structure, there are few opportunities for faculty members to share ideas with one another across grade levels or to collaborate on finding solutions to some of the persistent learning problems students encounter. There are inadequate personnel and ineffective structures in operation to monitor instruction across the school and insufficient support from content experts to help teachers develop the expertise they need.

Prospects for improvement at Perkins are brightened by the opportunity to select a new school leader with the skills needed to lead the school toward focused, data-based directions for change. A strong leader for Perkins will set high expectations for student achievement and, with district assistance, put in place the supports necessary to reach high standards. A strong Perkins leader will raise the expectations and accountability of teachers to use their experience and professional development to implement academic programs effectively. A strong Perkins leader will distribute responsibility for improvement across all faculty and staff. District influence on the selection of a strong leader with the skills needed to bring a new collaborative focus to the Perkins professional community will help assure positive growth.



## Perkins Elementary School Fact Finding Visit Schedule, Draft 1, March 28

**Day 1: Tuesday, March 30, 2004****Core Team Only**

	Core Team
12:00- 1:00	Hotel check-in, lunch
1:00 – 5:00	Core team summarizes review of documents, panel report

**Day 2: Wednesday, March 31, 2004****Full Team (Core Team + Practitioners)**

	Core Team	Practitioners
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Introductions to principal, school tour; additional focus areas for class visits	
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Set up workspace	Meet students to be shadowed
9:45 – 12:00 +/-	Meet with school leadership/ planning team	Shadow student #1
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	Lunch with students; break
2:00 – 3:00	Meet with district leaders/ support personnel	Shadow student #2
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Debrief school and district meetings, class visits; Construct responses to Domains 1 (and 2)	

**Wednesday, March 31, 2004 – Schedule Details**

Students	Chair	CoChair	Practitioner A	Practitioner B	Practitioner C
			K (one each class) & Gr 1 (one each class)	Gr 2 (101)& Gr 3 (203 )	Gr 4 (205) & Gr 5 (106)
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Introductions to principal, tour of school, setup workspace, review schedule, map				
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Prepare for school leadership meeting		Meet K & 1 students	Meet Gr 2 & 3 students	Meet Gr 4 & Gr 5 students
9:45 – 12:00 +/-	Meet with School Leadership team: Principal, Math Coach, Literacy Coach, Ms. Glover *		Shadow K1 & K2 student	Shadow Gr 2 student ; interview Meadows (10:30- 11:00)	Shadow Gr 4 student
12:00 – 12:40 lunch 1	Lunch and Break		Visit computer; Interview Hanev	Lunch & Break	Meet Gr 5 student
12:45 – 1:25 lunch 2	Summarize morning meeting notes		Lunch & Break	Meet Gr 3 student	Visit math wrkshp; interview Lesht
1:30 – 2:10 lunch 3	Meeting with District Support Personnel: Deputy Superintendent, School Support Specialist; Change coach (?);		Meet Gr 1 students; Shadow	Shadow Gr 3 student	Lunch & Break
2:00 – 3:00	Continue meeting with District Support		Shadow Gr 1 students	Visit math workshop; Interview Cotter	Shadow Gr 5
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Team debrief and moderation – Domains 1 and 2				

**DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31****Students needed for shadowing: Grades K, 1: one each class****Grade2 – room 101 (Carrul), Grade 3 Room 203 (Cotter)****Grade 4 Room 205 (Nakashian), Grade 5, room 106 (Lesht)**





**Day 3: Thursday, April 1, 2004****Full Team (Core Team + Practitioners)**

	<b>Core Team</b>	<b>Practitioners</b>
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Arrival, Review schedule, assign tasks	
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Share debrief summary with principal	Class visits as assigned
9:45 – 12:00 +/-	Interviews and focus groups	Class visits as assigned
12:00 – 12:40	Team lunch	
2:00 – 3:00	Debrief school visits, focus group meetings; Practitioners depart	
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Summarize Responses to Questions for Domains 3 & 4	

**THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 2004**

	<b>Chair</b>	<b>CoChair</b>	<b>Practitioner A</b>	<b>Practitioner B</b>	<b>Practitioner C</b>
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Introductions to principal, tour of school, setup workspace, review schedule, map				
9:00 – 9:30 AM					
9:45 – 10:30	Feedback and Interview with principal	Visit resource	Visit SAR (Glover)	Visit 206, gr 3 (Meadows)	Visit computer Gr 5
10:30 – 11:15	Class visits	Class visits	Visit 203, gr 3 (Cotter)	Visit Art, gr 3' Interview Meadows	Visit Gr 5, Lesht
11:15 – 12:00	Interviews or focus groups	Class visits, interviews, focus groups	Visit computer K; Interview Norton	Visit 201, gr 2 (Dewire)	class visits
12:00 – 12:40 lunch 1	Lunch with team	Lunch with team	Lunch with team	Lunch with team	Lunch with team
12:45 – 1:25 lunch 2	Interview Math coach	Interview Literacy coach	Interview Kaminsky	Visit 201 or 206	Interview Nakashian
1:30 – 2:10 lunch 3			Interview Carrul & Dancy	Interview Dewire	
2:00 – 3:00	Complete debrief and summary of Domains 1 and 2; practitioners depart				
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Core Team debrief and moderation – Domains 3 & 4				

**Day 4: Friday, April 2, 2004****Core Team Only**

	<b>Core Team</b>
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Arrival, review schedule of remaining interviews, class visits
9:15 – 9:45 AM	Share debrief summary with principal
9:45 – 12:00 AM	Complete any necessary class visits, interviews; finalize summary charts for all domains
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 3:00 PM	Meet with school and district leaders/ support personnel to report team's responses to protocol questions *

\* Attendees should include: principal, math coach, literacy coach, Deputy Superintendent, School Support Specialist, Change Coach, Mrs. Glover (and one other teacher involved in the school's WSIP)



**Appendix B: Team Members**  
**Perkins Elementary School, Boston, MA**

<b>Team Members</b>	<b>Title/Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>
Dr. Karen Laba	SchoolWorks	Chairperson
Terry VanDeCarr, Ed.D.	Consultant for SchoolWorks	Core Team CoChair
Erin Furey	Assistant Principal, R.A. Nock Middle School, Newburyport Public Schools	Team member
Lois Longin	Principal Hadley Elementary School, Swampscott Public Schools	Team Member
Krysten Rice	School Support Specialist, Lawrence Public Schools	Team Member





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Appendix B: Team Members  
 Federal Elementary School, Boston, MA

Team Members	This Organization	Role
Dr. Karen Latta	School/Work	Chairperson
Terry Vandenberg, PhD	Consultant for School/Work	Case Team Chairperson
Eric Furey	Assistant Principal, K.A. Hook Middle School, Huntington Public Schools	Team member
Lea Longin	Principal, Mary Margaret School, Town of Falmouth Public Schools	Team Member
Kristen Rice	School Support Specialist, Lawrence Public Schools	Team Member